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Introduction

The meaning of impairment is often Janus-faced. On the one hand, it is associated with defect, deformity, monstrosity and other tropes that carry the weight of ontological ruin, haunting narratives of physical, mental or sensory catastrophe that disturb the normate sense of being human (Hughes 2009). Impairment is invested with the debilitating social and moral consequences that symbolise disability. Disavowed and repudiated by the non-disabled community, disability represents the, murky, shadow side of existence that separates normal embodiment from its' benighted, abject 'other' (Shakespeare 1994). Disgust – on the part of non-disabled, 'clean and proper' subjects - is the likely emotional response to the pollution and impropriety that disability represents. The emotional relation between the two parties, is, mired in normate repulsion.

On the other hand, impairment is interpreted by non-disabled people as a 'personal tragedy' (Oliver 1990). The 'misfortune' of impairment is conceived as spoilt identity by the physical or intellectual narratives of vulnerability to which it is reduced. Compassion, sympathy, perhaps empathy but mostly pity, follow the suffering and pain that are assumed to dominate the lives of disabled people. Disabled people, according to the dominant narrative, embody wounds that will not heal; live lives determined by frailty and dependency and must appeal to the magnanimity and charitable instincts of 'sovereign' bodies to sustain their blighted existence.

In this paper, I argue that the double branding of disability representation as abject and vulnerable is central to the ontological and moral invalidation of disabled people, making disability central to the 'moral economy' in a variety of cultural contexts. When interpreted and represented as abject and monstrous, disability is *good to mistreat*. When interpreted as vulnerable and needy, disability is *good to be good to*. While these ableist approaches to impairment can be separated analytically, in practice they tend to form a de-moralising confluence of disabling processes. Ableism valorises invulnerability and the 'clean and proper body'. It does so, not only by propagating phantasies of human betterment and perfection but by expropriating the agency and dignity of disabled people. However, it is important to note that the twain can meet. Vulnerability can collapse into abjection, impairment into pollution.

Moral Economy

The concept of 'moral economy' was coined by the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson (1966; 1971). He used it as an analytical framework for understanding protest. His focus was the 'the moral economy of the poor' and the ethics of subsistence that arise amongst oppressed peoples in the course of class struggle to identify injustice

and vindicate resistance, rebellion and riot. Karl Polanyi (1944/2002) used the idea – though not the phrase - to argue that the market economy is embedded in social and moral practices that ameliorate its tendency towards profiteering and exploitation. The concept is widely used in a variety of fractured ways in a number of fields of study (Booth 2013). It has attracted a good deal of attention, recently in moral and economic sociology (Bolton and Laasar 2013; Sayer 2000; 2005; 2006; 2007; 20011) and draws upon debates about 'moral regulation' (Corrigan 1981; Dean 1994; Hier 2002; Hunt 1999) that inspired Marxist and Foucauldian scholars, particularly in the latter part of the last millennium.

The idea has widened considerably from its analytical base as a reflex of or reflection on the socio-ethical ramifications of the market. Moral economy can now be understood as the 'site' of 'lay normativity' (Sayer 2011: 5), the mundane spaces in which concern for and evaluation of others is developed and mobilised; This is an expansive 'site': As Hunt (1999: 8) argues: 'There is no "moral field", no place where "the moral" rules alone, or even predominates; morality is to be found everywhere'. The moral economy is trenchant in the relations that constitute everyday life and the judgements about others that shape its activities:

> Because of our psychological and physical vulnerability, our dependence on others and our capacity for diverse actions, and because of contingency, we are necessarily evaluative beings, continually having to monitor and evaluate how we and the things we care about are faring, and to decide what to do. Some of this evaluation is done "on automatic" through our "feel for the game", but some involves reflection or "internal conversations" (Sayer 2011: 5)

Morality - the evaluations that give it shape - impinges profoundly on the relations between disabled and non-disabled people. These relations are formed by the hegemony of the normate over the normative; constituting a culture of oppression in which disability is represented in negative ways (Young 1990). Moral economy - close companion to the material injustices that spring from political economy - is the space in which cultural or symbolic injustice thrives. Nancy Fraser (1997: 14) argues that cultural or symbolic injustice is 'rooted in social practices of representation, interpretation and communication' and that 'examples include … cultural domination … non-recognition and disrespect'. Fraser may not use the term moral economy *per se* but her (analytical) distinction between, on the one hand, the social politics of (in)equality and material injustice and, on the other hand, the cultural politics of difference and the symbolic injustice of culture suggest a realm of cultural valuations in which economically marginalised groups are deprecated and demeaned. The latter is a symbolic pawn shop where 'goods' of diminished value wait to be retrieved or decommissioned. If political economy is the realm of economic disadvantage, moral economy is the realm of cultural injustice, the space in which disability is disrespectfully constructed and subordinated to the ableist narratives of propriety and invulnerability. The normate habitus of worth and virtue attenuates the moral status of disability reducing it to an *instrument* – a very significant one – in the social

distribution and exchange of embodied value. Disability is positioned, in normate culture, as the antithesis of embodied value in terms of both 'its' diminished agency and 'its' polluting embodiment. As such, 'it' is both *good to be good to* and *good to mistreat*. Non-disability is, by contrast, ontologically pristine and self-sufficient. It is the touchstone of propriety and cleanliness and the wellspring of agency, the legitimate source of dignity and moral action.

The ableist moral economy is manifest in the dominant imaginary; in the cognitive and emotional space in which the concrete evaluations of persons and things are collectively and subjectively constructed and reconstructed. It is in this doxic and - for disabled people - toxic collective psyche that the taken for granted values underpining everyday life are stored, sorted and mobilised and, so, come to matter in mundane, sensate conduct. The dual representation of disability as polluting and vulnerable, situates disability at the heart of 'moral economy'; central to the production, distribution and exchange of moral sentiment. An 'affective economy' accompanies it. The principle emotional dispositions in the 'affective economy' that partner, abjection and vulnerability are disgust and pity. Other variants of these core emotions such as hatred, fear and compassion are also embroiled in the mixed economy of affects where felt relations of power and value between normality and difference are produced and executed.

'Disgust' writes Miller (1997: 200) 'marks out moral matters from which we can have no compromise' placing us 'truly in the grip of the norm whose violation we are witnessing or imagining'. To feel disgust is to make 'a judgement that an act' or a person 'has fallen beneath a standard or has ignored an accepted norm' (Wilson 2002: 51). Pity moves us to consider a hierarchal distribution of good fortune, in which 'we' – the unblemished - count our blessings as we consider the tragic indignities that have befallen the broken and the crooked while 'we' – *qua* the unpolluted subject - continue to prosper and thrive. Pity too involves a judgement about the life of the other: the assumption that it is mired in tragic deficit (Oliver 1990). Pity breeds opportunity to do good. Disgust creates opportunities for discrimination, exclusion and 'legitimate' violence.

These economies – moral and affective - are the mainspring of ableist social relations and through them it becomes possible to legitimate moral action in which disability is simultaneously *good to mistreat* and *good to be good to*. It is in and through this bifurcated and contradictory moral economy of abjection and vulnerability that the ablesit doxa of disability invalidation is performed.

Table 1: Dimensions of disability invalidation in the ableist moral economy

Ontological Level	**Vulnerable**	**Abject**
Embodied Representation	Wounded (*Vulneratus*)	Monstrous (*Monstrosus*)*
Emotional response	Pity	Disgust
Social response	Charity	Exclusion
Psychological response	Disavowal	Dehumanisation

Moral response	Good to be good to	Good to mistreat

Table 1 maps out the Janus-faced nature of disability representation and the responses to it across a range of socio-ontological levels but it is always possible, in the march of time, for vulnerability to collapse into abjection; for 'weakness', to become a pollutant; pity to become disgust, charity to be subsumed into violence and disavowal into dehumanisation. This is particularly the case in a moral economy where eugenic sentiments are strong.

Vulnerability

'[I]n western modernity … vulnerability is figured as a shortcoming, an impending failure both of form and of function; a predicate that marks its subject as potentially beyond normative standards of being … Those who too readily admit or who succumb to vulnerability are either weak or unfortunate' (Shildrick 2002: 71-2)

Vulnerability underpins companionship and compassion. The wound (*vulnus*) brings us face to face with our common humanity, our mortality. In suffering, self and other discover their mutual fate and from this encounter with the shadow of death the basis of community is formed. In Homer's *Iliad* the contrast between men and gods, vulnerable and invulnerable is a contrast between mortality and immortality. When gods – like Ares and Aphrodite - quibbling over events in terrestrial Troy are injured by fellow Olympians, there is no sympathy or compassion for the misfortunes of their peers. Why would there be? These wounds are hiccups in the play of eternity, not portents of ultimate doom. In the context of immortality, fellow feeling is beyond comprehension. The mortals fighting below are stung into compassion as comrades, fall in battle. The pain is shared. Homer goes to great lengths to describe the network of despair and suffering that follows the loss of the smitten hero. Celebration of the wounded is, however, muted by the tyranny of perfection that haunts classical culture. Impairment is an aesthetic abomination that pollutes embodied propriety.

Congenital deformity is exposed, eliminated or ridiculed. The wounded warrior is better off dead (Garland 2010). Vulnerability and weakness are despised. Impairment has no 'use value'. The aristocratic 'master morality' of Hellenic culture, eugenic to the core, invokes neither pity not charity for those that breach the ideals of embodied virtue (*arete*). The violent disposal of vulnerability is the standard response to impairment. Vulnerability – in classical culture - is abjection. It is not until the Christian middle-ages that disability becomes both *good to be good to* and *good to mistreat*. In this cultural context, disability becomes an instrument of redemption and a symbol of sinfulness attracting, simultaneously, charitable and violent responses; a dual contradictory form of moral representation that runs a rutted course into modernity, where secular notions of vulnerability begin to blossom.

For example, for Darwin, in *The Descent of Man*, the vulnerability of the helpless child is the wellspring of the 'instinct' of sympathy. Those we characterise as *good to*

be good to are products of the recognition of vulnerability in others. The vision of the 'good society' – for some enlightenment thinkers - rested on the elementary form of association inspired by the humanising drama of the wound. Adam Smith's (1723-1729) discovery of the epic productivity embodied in the division of labour is worked up into a vision of modern morality in which vulnerability is central. Smith (1776/2008) describes a 'system of perfect liberty' in which the egoistic pursuit of gain by individuals combined with the hidden hand of the market makes for an historical explosion of wealth. Yet Smith was both a political economis and a moral philosopher who argued in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759/2002) that 'man's' ability to make 'moral judgements' comes by way of his innate 'ability' to recognise suffering in others. He is stoic in his rejection of Hobbesian egoism. 'Men' are not 'wild beasts'. Humankind 'is marked by a basic harmony of interests' (Force 2003). Smith takes the view that 'man' is a social being, endowed with feelings of benevolence towards fellows. It is, Smith argues, the desire for approbation that brings sympathy and pity for the less fortunate to the moral centre of human activity; creating and sustaining a natural fellowship amongst members of the human race:

> How selfish so ever man may be supposed there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortunes of others and render their happiness necessary to him. Of this kind of pity or compassion, the emotion we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner (Smith 1979/2002: 86)

Smith understands that the entrepreneur, the recently historically formed, self-interested, individual, needs economic gratification and the balm of benevolence as two sides of the same coin. Grasping palms and give-away alms go hand in hand and the 'impartial spectator' – no longer God in Heaven – is the conscience of the accountant that sits, a little puffed up, at the cloudy centre of philanthropic capitalism. Smith's psychology comes to a place of striking tension in which it is difficult to disentangle rational calculation from the spirit of benevolence. It captures the aporia of fledgling modernity, when the newly formed individual must negotiate the relationship between self and other as a lonely existential priority; finding, in the process, that buying off misfortune with the coin of pity is a sure way to disavow disability and secure an identity untroubled by human vulnerability.

Liberal humanitarianism and compassion in its modern form emerges theoretically in the Scottish enlightenment and sits historically between the medieval system of *caritas* and the secular systems of state welfare that emerged in the 20th century. It remains embedded in contemporary movements of, for example, human rights and the protection of people from war and atrocity. Bryan Turner (1993; 2006) argues that our common human frailties and limitations are the most legitimate means to validate a theory of universal human rights. We are all part of a community of suffering by virtue of our common ontological vulnerability. Self and other see - as if across a crowded room - a reflection of one another, a mutual gaze, from which compassion arises.

> ‘Compassion involves an active moral demand to address others’ suffering. Directed towards those outside the scope of personal knowledge, it becomes public compassion, shaping moral obligations to strangers in the arenas of civil society and liberal democracy, A sociological study of compassion clarifies the historical processes through which compassion at other’s suffering shapes the definition of ‘social problems’ and investigates the means by which specialists in organising moral sentiments strive to alleviate the sufferings of others’ (Sznaider 1988: 117)

By mid-modernity compassion is organised into ‘humanitarianism’. Sznaider (1988:119-20) argues that humanitarianism developed alongside democracy and the market in the burgeoning space of civil society that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It focused on the amelioration of pain and suffering and on the cruel destinies of the less fortunate. It was the ideological glue at the heart of moral crusades against ‘slavery, cruelty to prisoners, animals and children’ and it organised campaigns for ‘factory, sanitary and prison reforms’ (Ibid).

Vulnerability, is transformed by social reformers into ameliorative strategies for social and moral problems. Impairment groups – like ‘idiots’ and ‘cripples’ and deaf, dumb and blind people – are either subsumed into the debates about eugenics and degeneracy or cradled by the humanitarians and reformers as among those that one should be *good to be good to*. In the moral economy of modern societies there is an ironic virtuous circle in which those made vulnerable by capitalism become the beneficiaries of its benevolence. Disability is, in this respect, an important marker of the intention to *do good* and to systematise compassion (Borsay 2005). In modern policy terms, where labour power becomes the measure of person’s use value, compassion translates into segregation and confinement. In the general pattern of the institutionalisation of vulnerability in ‘western democracies’, we find the disabled ‘individual’, singled out as exemplary. As Gibson (2006: 189) argues; ‘the binary division between independence / dependence has its roots in the sovereign, autonomous self, contained within a physical body’ where each is ‘individuated’ and able to ‘stand’ alone. Those who fail the test of autonomy – the prerequisite of economic survival – are epitomised as the vulnerable; the tragic human flotsam who come to depend on the contingent, voluntary bounties of sympathetic wealth.

In the ‘system of perfect liberty’, pity is the moral sentiment that joins *homo economicus* to the community of which ‘she’ is part. Humanity preens itself in recognition of the joy or tragedy of other’s lives. For those designated ‘tragic’, there are the pitfalls of pity to endure. It convenes the economy of affects and governs, with hierarchical paternalism, the emotional relations between the normate community and vulnerable disability. Despite laudable origins in human compassion, it can be a cruel master. Disability as object of pity, is assumed – by non-disabled people – to be a negative, problematic identity. Oliver (1990) argues that non-disabled people see ‘disabled lives’ as profoundly depleted by ‘personal tragedy’. Pity creates a hierarchy of fortune and favour – a basis for social inequality and for

the contempt that – as Rousseau suggested – lies at its dark heart. Pity diminishes the other just as it sustains the self's sense of ontological security; its inflated sense of intellectual and corporeal completion. Pity creates charitable 'targets', representing them as troubled, sick, abnormal, dependent. It equates disability with 'suffering'; non-disability with its amelioration. Pity underwrites charity but obscures the case for disability rights. For Rousseau, the corruption of the real world - *amour propre* - transforms mankind's natural sympathy for others into a source of contemptuousness, prompted by an underlying instrumentalism that twists benevolence into a show; a sham decency and makes those who appear to be *good to be good* to into victims of auto-gratification. The social correlate of pity is charity. It too is skewed by 'the fragility of goodness' by contingency playing tricks with ethics (Nussbaum 1986).

Douglas (2000: ix) argues: 'Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue, we know that it wounds'. Longmore contends that (1997: 14), 'although they ostensibly seek the physical repair of those socially invalidated by disability' televised charitable bashes are, in-essence, 'rituals of moral restoration for nondisabled communicants'. The telethon is a spectacle that seeks to 'effect the spiritual redemption, moral restoration and social elevation' (Longmore 2016: 59) of non-disabled people. For Douglas charity injures the recipient and for Longmore, it provides moral advantage to the donor. Reinhold Niebuhr (1932; 25) articulated both views: 'The powerful are more inclined to be generous than to grant social justice'; thus, philanthropy freezes when power is challenged or the gift accepted without appropriate humility. Charity sustains the distinction between 'the vulnerable' and 'the invulnerable'. It confers moral agency on the former while as it snatches it from the later. Pity and charity rest on the psychological foundation of 'disavowal'. Those who see themselves as persons in possession of ability, talent, self-reliance and fortitude throw a blanket of suffering over tragic lives; weaving strangers from the fabric of their own estrangement. Ableism is the force of imagination that sustains this moral divide.

The worm may turn

In classical society vulnerability was regarded as incompatible with virtue (*arete*). Human deformity could not be reconciled with *eudaimon*, with a flourishing life or a curriculum of excellence. Everyday evaluations of human worth were driven by 'physiognomic consciousness' (Evans 1969); the 'soul' judged on the basis of appearance. Weakness is unconscionable. As a sign of corruption and a source of pollution, it is greeted with contempt and revulsion, ridicule and exile. It is repugnant stigma; consigned to the margins.

Marginalisation, stigmatisation and maltreatment are the bread and butter responses to both vulnerability and abjection but vulnerability may occasion a measure of assimilation, albeit for reasons largely extrinsic to the needs of disabled people. The moral dynamic of the middle-ages combined violence and charity in its treatment of disabled people. The compassion associated with charity or *caritas* is morally

blunted by the wider context in which powerful and privileged givers of alms, benefit, by their apparent benevolence, through the theological principle by which they acquire spiritual advantage in their bid to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In the paradox of self-serving altruism, disability (and poverty), become instruments in the salvation of rank and wealth. In this system of indulgences, of barter for spiritual gain, compassion withers on the vine of celestial profit. The coin of compassion is a sound investment in salvation for those who can afford it. Money in exchange for redemption lies at the heart of the moral economy of medieval ableism. Disability mediates this system of spiritual tax relief for wealthy normates.

In the middle-ages, the scourge of sin also figures significantly in the dynamic of moral exchange. It is the blight of Christian lives and disability is recognised as a clear manifestation of its malignant presence. Disabled people were 'shunned by all who did not wish to be defiled or corrupted, or who had any regard for the safety of their own body or soul' (Winzer 1997: 85). As a potential contaminant of both soma and spirit and as a signifier of the monstrous and the demonic, disability, was a hallmark of the abject; an object of profane revulsion and of 'pious' disgust. Disabled people are trapped in a social landscape, permeated by a profound moral and emotional contradiction; a historical confluence in which pity and disgust meet and mix; a moral economy in which they are simultaneously *good to be good to* and *good to mistreat*.

Vulnerability, in modernity, represents the deserving unfortunate as a social problem. Mobilising vulnerability as a representation of disability in the United Kingdom, has been a feature of social policy under New Labour and subsequent Conservative led governments. This agenda has been important in shaping the moral economy. Kate Brown (2012: 41) argues that; 'singling out "the vulnerable" for special care and attention is linked to a moralising agenda in social policy, helping to create and sustain binary oppositions about the 'deserving' and 'undeserving''. Vulnerability is a code that shapes argument about the parameters of social responsibility and the limits of welfare provision. Those who require – by administrative definition - to be protected or 'safeguarded' (Association of Directors of Social Services 2012) are designated as the *vulnerati*. To qualify for 'special' attention, for the community gift of help, in neoliberal society, one must be in a serious or critical condition and be able to demonstrate wounds that are gaping (Goodin 1985) if not suppurating. The criteria of access to 'hospitality' have become incrementally but systematically more restrictive. The 'hospital' is a battlefield tent as 'the deserving' have been reduced in number and the magnanimity of the wider social body has contracted. It has become more difficult to qualify as one to whom the community feels obliged *to be good to*. If the ranks of the vulnerable are shrinking, those who are still so defined require protection. Yet the protection afforded to vulnerable persons is a double-edged sword. Vulnerability assumes a space close to the gutter. Recent empirical evidence supports this contention.

For example, Roulstone *et al* (2011) uncovered a contradiction in the Criminal Justice System in the UK. Disabled people, positioned in a discourse of vulnerability, increasingly 'victimised' by hate crime are disadvantaged by the perception that violence against them is a product of their weakness rather than the villainy of their attackers (Burghardt 2013: 562). In other words, susceptibility to harm associated with being 'vulnerable' undermines a robust response to hate crime. The epithet of 'blame the victim' applies. If those at risk of moral harm are harmed, perpetrators do so as if compelled by the logic of the relation manifest in their possession of agency as it contrasts with the inevitable docility of the victim.

The tension between disability as *good to mistreat* and *good to be good to* is evident in this convoluted logic. It points beyond these bifurcated moralities suggesting that the positivity implicit in being *good to be good to* is relative to the place of disability in the grander scheme of things. To be *good to be good to* does not necessarily mean that one will be on the receiving end of benefits or, if one is, that these benefits might come at a price. In the interface between representation as abject and vulnerable, one's situation as an 'object of sympathy' can be significantly refracted. The charity, help, care, support, etc., that follows vulnerability tends to position its recipients on the moral and material margins; that social space where the repulsion attributed to stigma and disreputable identity (Goffman 1963) is most likely to fester.

The question as to why vulnerability may pass into abjection and why pity might be displaced by disgust is addressed in (another) recent discussion of hate crime. In pondering the dearth of high status, widely publicised hate crimes against disabled people, Thornycroft and Asquith (2017) suggest that, in dominating representation of the hate crime victim, abjection dissolves interest and sympathy. A hate crime 'figurehead' like Stephen Lawrence has become a signifier of the struggle for justice, racial equality and human rights. There is no disability equivalent because abjection leaves nothing to valorise. The non-disabled imaginary cannot endure the affront to propriety that impairment represents to the 'clean and proper', autonomous liberal subject. Vulnerability, therefore, can be – even in a system where social protection is valued - a primary site of abjection; of the abandonment of the wounded who disturb 'identity, system, order' and signify 'the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (Kristeva 1982: 4). The compassion and sympathy that underlies human community and collective life is fragile – the more so in tough economic times. Competing moralities come together at the fertile confluence of pity and disgust: Whether to flee the corporeal mess that the other has become (for you) or to embrace the common humanity that springs to life in the shadow of fellow suffering – that is the question to which the answer is frequently hedged.

Abjection

Introductions to the concept of abjection usually begin, rightly, with a discussion of Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982), in which the many complex strands of the idea are developed: '[B]eing abject is the condition of having been discarded, like

excrement or a corpse, feeling this like venom in the veins, yet still clinging to a sense of personal identity' (Wilson 2002: xxi). The body as a site of 'taboo' and 'threatening otherness' (Kristeva1982: 17), is the central theme. A border between propriety and repulsion is placed at the heart of social relations. The former carries the weight of purity and the latter the threat of contamination and its emotional counterpart, disgust. Mary Douglas (1966) described 'dirt' as 'matter out of place'. Sartre described *le visqueux* – viscous or slimy - as a state of being neither solid nor liquid which, as an anomaly, is a source of fear and disgust. The abject evokes the 'dirt' and 'slime' of the body; its visceral, oozy, sludgy, excremental, taboo elements; it's mutability; it's mortality; it's journey towards putrefaction and dust. The abject is the dark not-so-secret-secret of the 'clean and proper body' of ableism. The 'clean and proper body' is, therefore, in its various historical incarnations, the tribunal of good self and citizen, the calling card of decency, the book seemingly judged appropriately by its bright, shiny, cover: 'Being abject is the condition of having been discarded, like excrement or a corpse, feeling this like venom in the veins, yet still clinging to a sense of personal identity' (Wilson 2002: xxi).

The 'clean and proper body' is right at the heart of the 'civilising process' (Elias 2000) in which bodily and emotional comportment are fashioned by cultural constraint into the kinds of seemly conduct that distinguish the moral self from its degenerate and dissolute counterpart. Power rests in pose and poise as well as in material wherewithal. *The good* can be seen in the posture and proprioception practiced by the 'clean and proper body' just as the opposite is manifest in its abject other.

The concept of disgust has been mobilised frequently in disability studies in recent years to characterise non-disabled perceptions of disability (Hughes 2009; 2012; 2012b; Schweik 2009: 94-97; Soldatic and Pini 2009; Soldatic and Meekosha 2012). So too has the concept of the 'clean and proper body' which has been most thoroughly developed in disability studies by Margrit Shildrick (2002) in chapter 3 of her book '*Embodying the Monster'*. She draws together the vulnerable and the abject as mutually reinforcing axis in the construction of monstrosity and maps-out how this combination constructs moral relations: 'the existence of monstrosity may serve to define by comparison and opposition the delimited corporeality and secure subjectivity of the majority, but what is important is the realisation that the standard is not normal but normative' (Shildrick 2002: 50).

In Western culture the normative pseudo-science of physiognomy has played an important role in the moral evaluation of disabled people. Virtue not only includes 'good behaviour', but also bodily and intellectual attributes like reason, beauty and physical strength. Indeed, the corporeal surface is regarded as a signpost to psyche and soul. Classical scholar Elizabeth Evans (1969) argues that Greek culture is steeped in 'physiognomic consciousness', so much so that everyday social relations are marked by a system of moral evaluation that stems from it. Beauty is good. Credibility and worth are manifest in appearance. Abjection was, therefore, deeply culturally embedded not only in moral meta-narratives but in 'lay normativity'. The

implications for disabled people are profound. One scholar argues that in ancient Greece physically disability is 'automatically assumed' to indicate degeneracy and corruption (Hartsock 2008: 40). To be happy and to flourish is dependent on physical and mental prowess. The celebration of ability in the virtue of the *eudaimon*, creates a very narrow doxa of being and becoming in which impairment is given no opportunity to participate. The polity disowns it. It is written off as disposable; to be made into a scapegoat (*pharmakos*) and expelled – vomited – from the community, preferably, eliminated at birth.

Berzins McCoy (2013) argues that for the 'wounded hero' in the ancient world, vulnerability is a source of virtue. This might be the case if the wounded hero could still contribute to the military effort (Edwards 1997: 38). However, this claim confuses the moral economy of the *Illiad* with the quotidian moral economy of ancient Greek culture in which social worth and physical beauty are thoroughly imbricated and the derision of disabled people a common occurrence. 'Veterans' Garland (2010: 78) argues 'may well have been as ready a target of derision as any other category of the disabled'. Distinguished military service may have provided little protection from disgust, ridicule and abuse. The dead hero who went down to a glorious death in the heat of battle is infinitely preferable, in his celebrated absence, to his wounded counterpart whose scarred presence is an affront to aesthetic propriety. Even in a warrior culture, the wound is a blow to both body and honour. Holmes (2007) argues that loss of blood is loss of 'vital energy'. It reduces the warrior to a liminal figure. As the wound heals, the flow of blood is replaced by impairment, suppuration by scar tissue. Abjection displaces vulnerability. 'Physiognomic consciousness' redefines the 'wounded hero'. In post conflict society, heroism is reframed by abject vulnerability. The warrior limps out of virtue and onto the margins. In this space where one's relationship to the norm is eroded, where autonomy declines, where stigma is embellished and sympathy turns to disgust, vulnerability and abjection are ubiquitous companions.

The abject, in modernity, is fashioned on the moral high-ground of ableism; especially where it meets racism and misogyny. This is a long process. The development of practices of courtly conduct and aristocratic poise begin in the late middle ages. The gentrification of manners and behaviour distinguish between valued and invalid forms of bodily comportment and their associated affects and the deployment of disgust as the motor force of social and self-control. The processes that constitute the historical fashioning and re-fashioning of a doxic habitus of propriety and seemly conduct – from the middle-ages through to modernity - create social distance between non-disability and impairment (Hughes 2012). As manners become more refined, disability becomes more socially marginal and more emotionally repulsive. The pedestal and the gutter; the 'clean and proper body' and its polluting other interweave in a combustible relational dynamic.

The construction and representation of disabled people as vulnerable and in need carries with it a counterweight of contamination and impurity in which disabled

people are regarded as dangerous, a threat to the virtues associated with normative embodiment and social order (Shildrick 2009). The propriety of both individual and social bodies is challenged by the presence of potentially contaminating impairment in the midst of community. Vulnerability is an opportunity for normate redemptive agency but it is also regarded as a threat to the constitutional integrity of persons and polity. As Burghardt (2013: 558) notes, 'the interplay between psychic, emotive and categorical understandings of both vulnerability and threat has recurring repercussions in the lives of people with disabilities as it contributes to the ongoing confusion and anxiety regarding the place of disability in modern culture'. Compassion for the wounded and repulsion in the presence of the wound are often co-located.

People traumatised by war or by acquired impairment – both ubiquitous in industrial society - much like its congenital sibling, are not conceived as 'clean and proper'. War and work may have origins in social duty and the latter may be lionised in rituals of remembrance but its casualties still transgress the ableist habitus of cleanliness and propriety and, in this condition, are open to the aversive affects that transgress human sympathy. The fellowship of pity and disgust, of virtue and aversion in a practical economy of affects are alluded to with regularity in modern philosophy and literature. Hume (1788/2016: 562) caught the flavour of contradiction when he argued that the 'sentiment of pity is nearly allied to contempt which is a species of dislike'. Blake, in the *First Book of Urizen*, exclaims that: 'In anguish … pity divides the soul'. For Nietzsche pity is a sign of weakness and a disavowal of the will to power. Our relationship to others involves internal warfare; the struggle between repulsion and attraction; a psychic tension between desire for fellowship and the repudiation of the other. Mary Shelley's eponymous monster finds himself trapped between pity and disgust 'God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image, but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance' (15.8). Tolkien's character Smeagol, who appears in both the Hobbit and Lord of the Rings, is a case study of a figure that invokes a swithering, unstable combination of pity and disgust in the uneasy and fractious relationships in which he becomes entangled. The potential for aversion to smother compassion in disability history can be evidenced by a significant range of examples, including the tension between eugenics and philanthropy in the nineteenth century (Snyder and Mitchell 2005) and the contradiction around notions of the 'deservingness' of disabled people that plagued normate conceptions of disability in early modernity and have resurfaced under neoliberal hegemony (Hughes 2015). *Resentiment* amongst the moral majority can transform sympathy into revulsion; magnanimity into maltreatment where 'the weak' are sacrificed on alters of social crisis or austerity.

One puts social distance between the object of disgust and oneself. A spatial gap ensures normate safety by disposing of the threat represented by the contaminant/stranger. The social response to disability as an object of disgust is primarily one of a) symbolic violence; which may mean exclusion, segregation,

marginalisation, stigmatisation or b) Elimination; infanticide for disabled infants (Antiquity): The gas chamber (Modernity). The social response is anthropoemic – or bulimic; suggesting the evacuation, exile or annihilation of the impurity that contaminants/strangers are/represent. Disgust in relation to the 'contaminating other' legitimates violent forms of agency in-order-to purify the social body and rid it of its 'revolting subjects' (Tyler 2013).

Abjection opens-up the moral order to the legitimation of violence against persons on the grounds of their repulsiveness (or as Durkheim might have it – their threat to social order): People categorised as monsters, scum, demons, animals, idiots, imbeciles, degenerates, sinners, lunatics, useless eaters … etc. represent 'matter out of place' or 'dirt'. These 'classifiers' undermine claims to humanity. In destabilising the ontological credentials of other people, possibilities for moral (i.e. legitimate) action are expanded. It becomes a virtue to weed-out 'elements' in the community who represent a threat to it (however irrationally conceived). Those who seek to 'purify' or 'decontaminate' communities appeal to disgust as the moral template upon which their violent actions are based. Some people –disabled people - become less than human. Some people – disabled people - become *good to mistreat.*

Purified identity and the expropriation of agency and dignity

In 'The Fall of Public Man', Richard Sennett (2002) traces the rise of the 'tyranny of intimacy'; a process – that began in the 18th century - through which public social interaction declines and local, familial space becomes 'morally sacred' (2002:295). In this context community is emptied of sociability and the vivid experience of others that is the complex accompaniment of social interaction. Community becomes 'mythic', 'a weapon against the outside world' (Sennett 1996: 5); for it is derived from a 'purified' sense of similarity; identification with an abstract, generalised other 'who' has no content garnered from the experience of the mess and volatility of public life. Community is replaced by its idealisation; by a desire for belonging conceived as an orderly space of comfort and protection that is coherent and unsullied by the contaminations of difference. The sphere of public human communication is drained of disorder, as seekers of a purified identity abjure all that is vulnerable and abject in human relations.

Sennett implies that social relations in modernity create and sustain a systematic pattern of abjectification of difference and hypostatisation of self-reliant agency by adhering to a homogenised notion of community and solidarity. What Sennett suggests about contemporary urban communities is manifest in many other historical instances in which the dynamic of purification is, simultaneously, one of putrefaction. Every pedestal creates a gutter; spews out the 'unworthy' by expropriating their agency and dignity.

Social processes of purification posit ideals of human becoming. The ableist doxa of embodiment privileges' normal' corporeality: yet, it does so grudgingly, for it aspires to greater heights; to enhancement and ultimately, to perfection. One can detect the aspiration to an unblemished humanity in a variety of cultural contexts; the virtuous *eudaimon* of classical culture; the theomorphic doctrine of *imago dei* – or man made in the image of God – in medieval Christendom; the celebration of the *eugene* (well-born) of middle-modernity or the post-human/trans-human phantasies of hyper-modernity. Each of these aspirations embodies a normate desire for a *better* humanity manifest in the form of a putative utopian corporeality. The pedestal and the gutter may mutate across time and place but as polarities of the moral economy they are intertwined.

Table 2: The pedestal and the gutter

Culture	**The pedestal**	**The gutter**
Antiquity	*Eudaimonia* (physical and mental virtue/excellence)	Physical deformity/want of reason
Christian middle-ages	*Imago dei* (image and likeness of God)	Monster/demon
Middle modernity	*Eugene* (well born)	Idiot/cripple
Postmodernity	The trans-human	The subhuman

These moral binaries underpin aspirations for some-kind-of-Absolute beyond the norm of given social experience, for a Platonic/Hegelian 'reality' above and beyond crude forms of empirical embodiment: Absolute virtue for the Greeks; glorious, angelic resurrection for the Christians; unblemished purity for the Victorians and a sci-fi super-humanity for the contemporary period. Utopian notions of life up-scaled to a new plane of excellence and achievement have the tendency to reconfigure disability as – even more - ontologically problematic, as a threat to the ambitions of autonomy, propriety, nobility and the good life; to depict 'it' as a putative pollutant in the crystal-clear waters of life. Douglas (1966: 48) argues that 'our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classification'. It is therefore, 'a central source of moral order' (ibid: 154); a sort of social 'anal retentiveness' that vilifies anything perceived or represented as unhygienic.

Each of the super-hygienic aspirations described in Table 2 above has, buried in its cultural core, the repudiation of the unnatural and the irrational, the elimination of all manifestations of chaos in psyche and soma, including the disavowal of physical and intellectual impairment. The moral economy is not only inflected by the normate or ableist influences of everyday lay normativity but also by extravagant ontologies of human being enmeshed in fantasies of invulnerability and perfection that embody the disavowal of mortality and the dystopian magnification of human capabilities. Simultaneously, the moral climate of disavowal and dehumanising actions towards people perceived as contaminating is exacerbated. The desire to flee the 'all too

human'; to abrogate abjection and vulnerability in the realisation of an odyssey of perfection is indicative of the enduring repulsiveness of corporeal life, *le visqueux* (Sartre 1966). Signs of messy embodiment and dependency evoke the enduring threat of mortality; the dread of death and decay that ableist reveries of the pedestal seek to conceal. In these fantasies of betterment and perfection the mortal and the moral steer a course towards one another; the former eclipsed by the latter.

As *instruments* of moral agency (for non-disabled people), disabled people are corralled into a network of regulating structures *for their own good*. This involves a double expropriation of core elements of disabled people's humanity that is derived from their designation as vulnerable and abject. To define (or misrecognise) an individual as vulnerable suggests an expropriation of their agency and to define (or misrecognise) an individual as abject is to expropriate their dignity. If the poor and the proletariat are created, as Proudhon argued, by the expropriation of property, disability is created by the expropriation of agency; by the transformation of impaired people into persons to whom things are and should be done for and/or to. In a general theoretical sense, this 'stripping out' of the agent from the impaired body is fundamental to the cultural subordination, including the disavowal of disability, and its 'othering' as an identity. It underpins the processes by which the normate community can fashion its system of evaluations about self and other; including the aggrandisement of individual autonomy and self-reliance that this privileged club attributes to its members. Ableism prospers from a moral economy in which disability is invalidated; in which disabled people are positioned as incapable of managing their own well-being. By contrast the autonomous agent is capable of negotiating the traps and pitfalls from which the vulnerable must be safeguarded. The able are able to recognise their prospects for flourishing and for, as Aristotle would have it, 'realising the good life'. They have the gifts to ascend to the pedestal. Pity goes out to those who are not so blessed. Charity, philanthropy and welfare, institutionalise the good conduct that follows from the misappropriation of disabled people's agency. Vulnerable people are *good to be good to*.

There is a second reason why the pedestal has no room for disability. This has to do with its alignment with a range of historically variable tropes that condemn it to or, at least, align it with, the gutter. Monstrosity, sin, contamination, crookedness, irrationality, leakiness, vengefulness, abnormality … and one could go on ... and on. These negative moral evaluations suggest that, at best, disability is a spoiled identity, at worst a putrefied form of humanity, an abomination. They have been used to conjoin disability and abjection and bring disgust into centre-field in the economy of affects that it shapes. The relationship between disabled and non-disabled people relies on the expropriation of disabled people's dignity and simultaneously, the approbation of non-disability as a proper way of being-in-the-world. The de-dignification of disability legitimates the maltreatment and violence that has followed disabled people across history, from eugenic infanticide in antiquity, through demonization in the Christian middle-ages and institutionalisation during the period

of the ‘great confinement’ to the gas chambers of Hitler’s Germany and the ‘hate crimes’ reported by contemporary criminal justice systems. People, dehumanised and dispossessed of their dignity are *good to mistreat*.

Conclusion

To place disability in the moral economy is to map-out the dimensions of human evaluation in any given social or historical context. These dimensions provide a window on the distribution of human worth; the relative validity of groups or persons; the qualities that come to be admired or demeaned. This distribution is difficult to plot as a continuum. Evaluation in the social world of quotidian phenomenological simplifications tends to cohere into binaries of good and bad, right and wrong; ‘typifications’ that help us to handle complexity by reducing it to manageable categories. These moral types do not fall from heaven and cannot be read-off from nature. They arise in the welter of social relations from the play of power that gives them shape. For disabled people, normate power and the ableism dominate the landscape of evaluation

Disability is caught in a dialectical contradiction of attraction and repulsion, compassion and disgust, vulnerability and abjection. I do not understand this situation as inevitable, as an essence or an existential universal; a condition of always and everywhere. It is rather best understood in terms of ‘social ontology’’; positions, or perspectives of the imaginary constructed in particular and concrete ways that are relative to time and space, history and culture (Hughes 2007). They are strongly related to the age-old issue of how human communities deal with questions of mortality and morality; the ways of being in the world that are valued and disvalued. The judgements that every society makes about where virtue lies and where it does not, sit at the core of the moral social ontology of the day.

The moral space occupied by disability in the social world is a dialectic that needs to be critically unpacked, principally by a historical sociology of disability invalidation that works through the impact of the interplay of abjection and vulnerability on disabled people’s lives. It must also examine how the vestigial presence of past prejudice re-erupts in newly moralised representations of those lives and how this dissembling heritage of ableism burdens disabled people, unfairly, with a reputation for inaction and unseemly being.

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